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WOMAN SUFFRAGE.

“If you wait awhile in any gallery of pictures,” says Goethe, writing of art, “and observe what works attract the many, what are praised and what are neglected, you will have little pleasure in the present and little hope for the future.” The same observation is applicable to the books given to the world by the novelist who writes under the *nom de plume* of Ouida, and whose chosen home is in Italy. For a quarter of a century she has turned out an average of a book a year, nor is there any indication of exhaustion in her creative energy, nor flagging in her industry. Her novels receive the prompt condemnation of the literary critic and the stern protest of the moralist. Nevertheless, their hold upon popular favor is very tenacious, and they are eagerly read alike by old and young, the illiterate and the lettered, women and men.

It cannot be denied that Ouida's books show cleverness. She has a keen sense of beauty, and is richly endowed with ideal imagination. Her general knowledge is extensive and varied, and she has a wide outlook upon nature. But her stories are coarse and unnatural in detail, exaggerated in incident, vulgar in their worship of limitless wealth, and immoral in tendency. Her heroines are always spangled, bedizened, and unreal creatures. Her preposterous heroes, whom she presents as types of the aristocracy of our day, are of the same dazzling and unlikely sort. Like Disraeli, she gives us a surfeit of splendor, and fatigues us with gorgeousness.

But the worst feature of her novels is their coarseness. Her dainty puppets have an inordinate appetite for the grossest forms of sensuality. Her men rejoice in many mistresses. They “must have ripe, scarlet mouths to kiss in lawless sovereignty, because they are men.” They worship “love, wealth, and enjoyment.” They are all “god-like,” and yet are “high-souled debauchees,” “devils of fellows for women,” who “act up to their *physique*,”

and whose lives are "erotic poems" and "long liaisons." One of her early novels was written with the object of warning young men against "that worst of all evils, early marriage." Till they have been "steeped to the lips in sensuous delights," Ouida thinks they should "content themselves with love that can be bought."

Her women are worse than her men, if possible. If married, they have many lovers, and are generally unfaithful to and deceive all. One is "a splendid Cleopatra, who dances break-downs at my lord's theater"—"a woman with loose, shining hair, and bare limbs." Others are "blasé aristocrats"—"queens of the demi-monde"—"wanton women with the accident of beauty"—"false and worthless jades." "Nor is ordinary sensuality sufficient for Ouida," says Harriet Waters Preston, in a recent criticism. "Adultery is often too pale, and she must needs hint at something worse. . . . Doubtless her vaulting ambition to portray these ecstasies of crime o'erleaps itself, and suggests the idea that she may really be as ignorant of the world of men, as she must be of that of letters."

Of any love higher than the animal instinct, we recall no example in Ouida's novels. "The trustful love of a faithful spaniel" is her favorite phrase for the love of a pure woman. In a cynical way she analyzes all human feelings as the botanist does a flower, or the anatomist the human body. Her lack of faith in humanity is ultra and scornful, and she scouts the idea that goodness and truth, sincerity and purity, are abroad in the world, redeeming and uplifting it. She fails to see that the human race has always had before it an ideal of a noble life, the attempt to realize which constitutes progress. Instead, she exalts cynicism, skepticism, and immorality, into a cult, and from a startling array of hard, pitiless facts, deduces a sensuous Pantheism, which, in her novels, does duty as a religious faith.

When Ouida attempts the rôle of the essayist, she betrays the same literary characteristics and moral tendencies that have made both her books and her name an offense. Into her tirade against Woman Suffrage—directed mainly against Republican Government and women, and which does not rise once to the height of argument—she carries her usual recklessness of statement and exaggeration of tone. It is surcharged with the gall of a venomous scorn for men and women—for women especially—and a vaunting

indecenty, in which she has indulged till they have become a part of herself. We easily forgive her attack on this reform, the alphabet of which she fails to comprehend, from sheer gratitude that the whim did not seize her to advocate it. We are entirely resigned that she takes her place among the "Remonstrants."

Not believing in the people—or "the mob, uneducated and unwashed," as Ouida calls them—she has no faith in government by the people, and so levels her first blow at democratic institutions. She regards "the whole system of electoral power all over the world as absurd," and condemns a republic because it does not carry out the doctrine of "the supremacy of the fittest." What form of government does? Imperfection inheres in everything human. Monarchical governments, which begin in usurpation, are perpetuated by the laws of hereditary descent, and supported by small aristocracies and standing armies, have very rarely been administered by those fit to rule. It is a hazardous business to change the ruling king or emperor, even when he is justly detested by his subjects. But in a government of the people which maintains its permanence by constitutional provisions, the rulers may be changed at the will of the majority whenever they are dissatisfied.

The everlasting granite on which the national life of America rests is the self-evident truth that man has an inherent right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, out of which grows the right of self-government. This basic principle runs through the literature of the past from the days of the "Zend Avesta." And for thousands of years the great heart of the world, groaning under the tyranny of autocrats, has throbbed with prophetic desire for its realization in a government of the people. At last, the day has dawned for which millions have prayed, and fought, and died, and the reign of the people is beginning. That there are evils inseparable from popular government no one can deny, nor that some of them are of alarming portent. The pessimist, who leaves out of his calculations that divine spirit which works for righteousness, and which is abroad in the earth, can easily manufacture from them a prediction of swift-coming national ruin. But the same may be said of every government under the sun.

It can be shown, however, that under the American government, as under no other, there has been general prosperity and comfort, and a general regard and hearty respect for law and order.

An incessant vigilance of public men and measures is maintained, and discussion of public questions is unshackled, resulting in a high average of political knowledge and common sense among the people. Foreign wars have been avoided, and, at an appalling cost of men and money, the colossal evil of chattel slavery has been abolished. In the main, justice has been administered, abuses reformed, improved methods inaugurated, and, through all, the national honor has been maintained untarnished. "If a tree is to be known by its fruit," says a recent writer on this subject, "there must be a saving virtue in institutions which have so well answered their purpose."

It was necessary that Ouida should first dispose of republican government and its electoral system. For she sees very clearly the absurdity of withholding the suffrage from women, if manhood suffrage is universal. "To see a woman of superior mind and character," she writes, "capable of possessing and administering a great estate, left without electoral voice, while her carter, her porter, or the most illiterate laborer on her estate possesses it, and can exercise it, is, on the face of it, absurd." Of course it is absurd. The fathers of the American Republic proclaimed that the power of the government was based on the consent of the people, in whom the right of self-government inheres. Men *and women* compose "the people," not men alone. In a democracy like ours, every argument, therefore, for the enfranchisement of men does double duty—it enfranchises women also. Even Ouida concedes this, rabid as she is at the prospect of Woman Suffrage.

As a counterpoise to this concession, she throws into the scale the statement that "the only possible recommendation for the admission of women into public life is that it would necessarily involve their use for military service." This she evidently regards as impossible. The hard-worked fallacy, that "behind every ballot stands a bullet," has become threadbare by constant use and refutation. A republic is not supported alone by physical force, but rests mainly on moral force and on the consent of the people. The Constitution of the United States declares that it rests on "the wisdom and knowledge as well as virtue diffused generally among the people."

Neither in England nor America has the right to vote been made to depend on the ability to fight. If only they were enfranchised in America who are physically able to do military duty, a

large proportion of the voting men of the nation would be deprived of the suffrage. All soldiers disabled in the service of the republic would be counted out. All men over forty-five years of age, who are regarded as incapable of fighting, of whom there are over 97,000 in the single State of Massachusetts. All clergymen, because of the moral service they are supposed to render. And a great host that are not enumerated, who after enlistment are rejected and not "mustered in," because of physical disqualifications revealed in the examining-room of the surgeon.

And there would be enfranchised the majority of young men, between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one, who possess excellent fighting qualities, of whom there are over 48,000 in the State of Massachusetts, but who cannot vote, because they are minors. To these would be added a large force of women among the lower classes, superb in physical ability, but lacking in mental, and sometimes in moral qualities. They might, nevertheless, be trained to be good soldiers, since brawn and physical prowess are most needed in military life.

But when a nation goes to war, it claims other service of its citizens, both women and men, than that of fighting merely. "Did any Englishman who rode into the jaws of death at Bala-klava serve England more effectively than Florence Nightingale?" asks George William Curtis. They who serve the armies of a nation, who discharge the duties of the hospital, and keep in repair the military force, as it wastes from sickness and wounds, who maintain the sentiment, at home, of loyalty to the Government, and uphold that supreme moral force necessary to the success of a people in its time of struggle—they are as important as the army itself. Ten per cent. of an army is detailed to serve the rest, and they do no fighting.

The Government of the United States allows its subjects in time of war "to give their personal services, or an equivalent, when necessary." Quakers vote, and yet are excused from military duty on moral grounds, and are allowed to render other service, as many of them did during our late civil war. Why may not women be placed on the same ground as Quakers? Their services were invaluable during the war of the rebellion, continuous and heroic. Said Abraham Lincoln at the opening of one of the great sanitary fairs: "I am not accustomed to use the language of eulogy. I have never studied the art of paying compliments to women. But

I must say, that if all that has been said by orators and poets since the creation of the world, in praise of women, were applied to the women of America, it would not do them justice for their conduct during this war."

Dropping the rôle of logician, in which she is not a conspicuous success, Ouida grows prophetic, and utters most dismal vaticinations concerning woman suffrage. She tells us that "the net result of the entrance of the woman into the political arena will not be for the happiness of humanity. . . . Women would increase and intensify the present despotisms and weaknesses of political life, and would put nothing in their place. . . . Women would never legislate for men with anything approaching fairness. . . . If female suffrage becomes law . . . the result will scarcely be other than the emasculation and the confusion of the whole world of politics." These and similar prophecies are distributed through her pages.

We know not what special qualifications Ouida may possess for soothsaying, nor need we wait to learn. For the results of woman suffrage in England and America have been before the world these dozen years. A little over fifteen years ago England gave municipal suffrage to unmarried women on the same terms as men. It proved so great a success, especially in school management and in the care of the poor, that last year the same right was accorded to the women of Scotland. In 1880, the women of the Isle of Man, who owned real estate equal in value to twenty dollars a year, were given the parliamentary franchise. When the women voted in 1881, for the first time, the local press announced that "the new political element acted in the most admirable manner." The right of municipal suffrage has also been conferred on unmarried women in many of the provinces of Canada, who have used their power in a serious and responsible spirit. Sweden recognizes the fitness of women to share in the government, by allowing them to vote for municipal officers on the same terms as men, and also for the electors of the "Upper Council," which elects the "Upper Chamber." Austria does the same. By an imperial decree, in 1863, women were given the right to vote at municipal, provincial, and national elections, by choosing some male friend to represent them at the polls. Russia has, for centuries, allowed women, in the same way, to vote for members of the "Municipal Council" and "County Assembly."

In the United States, the woman suffrage movement has achieved a most enviable status, numerically and morally, and is winning its way, at the present time, with unprecedented rapidity. In 1869, the Territory of Wyoming gave full suffrage to women. At the end of ten years Hon. J. W. Kingman, a graduate of Harvard College, and for four years a Judge of the Supreme Court of that Territory, wrote to the *Boston Herald*, "Our best and most cultivated women vote understandingly and independently. . . . They cannot be blinded by party prejudice nor wheedled by social influence. . . . The general influence of woman suffrage has been to elevate the tone of society, and to secure the election of better men to office." From all trustworthy sources the testimony accumulates, that after seventeen years' experience the people of Wyoming are more in favor of woman suffrage than ever. They declare, through their local papers, that "the laws were never respected nor enforced, nor crime punished, nor property and life protected, as since woman has taken her place in the jury-box and at the polls." Similar testimony comes from Washington Territory, where women were enfranchised in 1883.

Twelve States of the American Union have given women school-suffrage, which in some States limits them to a vote for school-committee, and in others gives them the right to vote on all matters relating to the public schools, and makes them eligible to the offices of County and State Superintendent. The capacity of women for public affairs receives large recognition in the United States. They are elected, or appointed, to such offices as those of county clerk, register of deeds, pension agent, prison commissioner, State librarian, overseer of the poor, school supervisor, school superintendent, executors and administrators of estates, trustees and guardians, engrossing clerks of State Legislatures, superintendents of women's State prisons, college principals and professors, and members of boards of State charities, lunacy, and correction. And in all these positions women serve with men, who acknowledge most graciously the practical wisdom and virtue they bring to their duties.

Women act as accountants and book-keepers, physicians and surgeons, painters, sculptors, and architects, authors and journalists, clergywomen and lawyers, and when admitted to practice law at the bar of their own States, have the right to practice at the bar of the Supreme Court of the United States. President Grant

appointed over five thousand women to the office of post-mistress. "And although many women have been appointed to positions in departments of government, and to important employments and trusts," said Senator Blair, of New Hampshire, from his seat in Congress, "as far as your committee are aware, no charge of incompetence, or malfeasance in office, has ever been sustained against a woman."

"On the other hand," says Hon. William I. Bowditch, of Massachusetts, "five times as many boys as girls are in reformatories. More than five times as many men as women are prison convicts. More than twice as many men as women are paupers, and about seventy times as many men as women are engaged in the manufacture and sale of liquor—the nurse of pauperism and crime. . . . Men drink and women suffer. With manhood suffrage, we spend for drink six times as much as we do for education every year. Cannot we prudently call on women to help us by their votes, so that we may at least expend as much for the education as we do for the brutalization of the race?"

In the face of facts like these, which might be multiplied indefinitely, what becomes of Ouida's cheap predictions of disorder and disaster, sure to follow the legal enactment of woman suffrage? How baseless her assertions that women are more unscrupulous, untruthful, tyrannical, and immoral than men! As a rule, the average man and woman are very much alike. But to-day the average woman is better educated, for the girl stays longer in the school than the boy, and pursues more thoroughly a more extensive course of study. She is very likely to review or continue her studies after she leaves school, through the agency of some one of the many "clubs," "circles," or "societies," organized for this purpose. She enjoys more of the education and refining influence of home and family life. She is more interested than man in religious matters, for five times as many women as men attend church service and are church communicants. And as she rarely muddles her brain with drink, or drops into profligate habits, the average woman of our time exceeds the average man in intelligence, morality, and refinement. And this is so well understood in the world of business, work, and trade, that women have superseded men in many departments where intelligence and trustworthiness are indispensably requisite. In 1840, when Harriet Martineau visited this country, she found but seven industries open to women. The

last United States census enumerates nearly three hundred occupations into which women have entered.

Not until a very recent date has man shown any of the "fairness in his legislation for woman," of which Ouida boasts. A hundred years ago, the historian Gibbon wrote: "In every age and country, the stronger of the two sexes has usurped the powers of the State, and confined the other to the cares and pleasures of domestic life." This injustice, backed by the teachings of the mediæval church, not yet entirely obsolete, has perpetuated the contempt for women, begun in barbarous times, when every woman was the slave of some man. It succeeded, at last, in the breaking down of women, and leading them, as Michelet has observed, "to distrust and despise themselves, and to look upon themselves as inferior, and half accursed beings." Out of this subject and abject condition they are lifting themselves to-day, aided by men who have attained almost divine development in justice and manliness.

The most civilized nations of the earth still oppress and degrade women with their unjust laws. In a majority of the United States, the legal wife and married mother is denied ownership of her earnings and a right to her minor children. The legal claim to both resides in the husband and father, until the courts decide otherwise. And as late as 1879, in the State of Massachusetts, "the husband legally owned the wife's clothing, although that clothing was bought with money partly owned by her." Not until men translate into practical verity the great axiom of the Declaration of Independence, that "governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed," and women are allowed a voice in the formation of the laws made for them, shall we approach the time when law and justice shall be interchangeable terms.

The reiterated assertion of Ouida, that woman is inferior to man, stripped of its verbiage, means only that she is unlike man. This we frankly admit, and upon this very difference between the sexes base an argument for the enfranchisement of woman. It has been the error of the past, as it is yet too largely the blunder of the present, to assume that man is the standard, and that the civilization which he has created embodies whatever is best and most permanent in human excellence. But man is only one half the integer we call humanity. Woman is the other half, possessing a more complex organism, and a larger total of functional

powers. One is the masculine half, and the other the feminine half. Each is endowed with aptitudes and capacities that the other, in some measure, lacks. Each is the complement and the supplement of the other.

“For woman is not undeveloped man,
But diverse. Could we make her as the man,
Sweet Love were slain. His dearest bond is this,
Not like to like, but like in difference.”

The whole is more and better than its half. Or, as this truth is formulated in Holy Writ, “it is not good for man to be alone.” Human society has attained its present high development under the leadership of man, the masculine half of humanity, who, all the while, has limited the scope and belittled the functions of woman. What may not be reasonably predicted in the way of progress, when she shall be as free to define what is womanly, as man has been to show what is manly? When there shall be yielded her equality of development with men, and freedom to shape her life in accordance with her tastes and capacities? When manly men and womanly women, equal in rights but differing in function, shall work together for the realization of higher ideals in righteousness, justice, purity, and fraternity?

The prognostications of evil, which have attended this reform from its inception, have died out unverified wherever it has secured a foothold. It has not promoted discord in families, nor extirpated from the heart of women, love of husband, children and home, nor rendered women unwomanly, nor brought to the front those unfortunate and unhappy women whom Ouida catalogues, and with whom she appears to have so large an acquaintance. On the contrary, it has made the polls more respectable, has elevated better men to office, and has begun the purification of politics. And these good results of small beginnings furnish a great hope for the future to all who love the race. We will therefore forgive Ouida the foul wrong she has done her sex in her abusive tirade. Evidently her lines have not fallen in pleasant places, or she would not be so bitter, nor, to judge from her published writings, have her associations been with men and women of the nobler and better sort. It offsets many of the sins of her essay, that she throws into the scale with woman, Gladstone, who is the grandest man of the world connected with human govern-

ment, putting into the serious business of ruling a great people, more of honor, conscience, and a sense of responsibility to a Higher Power, than any other living ruler of the time. There is a better day ahead. "This fine old world of ours is, as yet, but a child in its go-cart ; give it time to learn its limbs."

" Then comes the statelier Eden back to men :
Then reign the world's great bridals, chaste and calm ;
Then springs the crowning race of humankind."

MARY A. LIVERMORE.